

Self-Preparation

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PUBLISHED BY
THE STAR PUBLISHING TRUST
EERDE, OMMEN, HOLLAND

First Edition, July, 1926.

Second Edition, July, 1927.

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CONTENTS

I. A NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE	7
II. THE PATH	23
III. CARE OF THE PHYSICAL BODY	29
IV. MEDITATION	47
V. CEREMONIAL	58
VI. OUR PLACE IN THE PLAN	72
VII. UNITY	90

A New Year's Message

I.

LAST summer, I spent some time in North Italy with a party of friends, at the old Castle of Pergine, in the Trentino.

From this Castle, perched on a high hill, we could gaze over the beautiful Italian plains, dotted, as far as the eye could see, with innumerable little villages. In the far distance, mountains, covered with snow, sparkled in the brilliant sunshine.

At the foot of the hill lay a deep blue lake, and a river wandered gleaming through the plains.

In silence and with deep delight I gazed one evening upon these fair things of earth, and my mind turned naturally to a subject I had been discussing with my friends.

What, I wondered, was the one thing above all most necessary to bring us nearer to the Master. How could we approach that Holy Presence, in which all desire ceases except the desire to be like Him?

Each of us, that afternoon, had expressed his or her opinion, but none seemed to have reached the true, the innermost secret — to have touched the hidden and authentic well-spring of the inner life.

Pondering over the question again by myself, the following thoughts came to me; and I give them as our marching orders for the coming year. Each student must interpret them for himself, and act upon that interpretation with the fervour and zeal of a devotee.

The understanding of Truth will kill out self, for self cannot exist where Truth reigns. Seek, therefore, the world of Truth, and you will dispel the darkness where self abides; thus only shall you come to know the Master. Leave no stone unturned, however small, for Truth may lurk beneath it. Rise to the inner level of the mind, from which you can behold the Truth in all its nakedness and not be blinded.

To do this, you must have courage and intelligence— not the intelligence developed by mere book-reading, but the higher intelligence of balance and commonsense. Only when you have acquired these will you be able to understand truly the simplicity, and at the same time the profundity, of the following lines, which I repeat for you in order that you may strive to carry them out in your lives, laying hold of your task like giants, magnificent in strength and courage.

How long will you be like men with shut eyes
seeking the sunshine?

How long will you be like starving men that,
having food in their hands, will not eat?

Behold, the happiness you seek is not afar.
It is near you, it is very near.

For learn then, this:

Who serves Me, finds Me.

Who forgets himself, him I remember.

If you would see Me, do but open your eyes;
for I am there.

I am your Helper, if you will only let me help.

II.

There is, I am sure, much worry, much misery, and much happiness in store for each one of us; and each of us will make use of these things, emotionally and intellectually, in exact accordance with his or her stage of development. Every one of us will emerge at the end of the New Year either greater or smaller; or we shall not grow at all, remaining in complete inertia just what we are. But, for those of us who are in earnest, what does a New Year mean? Does it not, or can it not mean this? We are like travellers entering, in our long quest, upon a new and unknown country, where strange fortunes and strange adventures await us. In this land, as he passes through it, there are opportunities that crowd in upon the observant pilgrim. But to make use of them, he must be wise and alert. For one thing, he must remember that he is

a traveller, and that his business is not to tarry, but to pass onward. He must learn what he can of the ways and customs of the people and the country, seeking out, with discriminating eye, everything which it may profit him to study. But his heart must be fixed on his goal, on the yet more distant land that lies beyond. The country in which he finds himself may be of interest, and what is interesting in it he should note, but it has for him the supreme importance that through it lies the road which shall lead him onward, that he must cross it in order to reach that Promised Land of greatness whose far-off peaks he has already espied.

Such should be our attitude towards the coming year.

We have two alternatives before us, progress or stagnation; and between these two things we must choose. "Change, change and never stagnate" is the motto

of the seeker. Remember that you cannot have both. You cannot be the marathon runner and, at the same time, the self-satisfied follower of the old and well-worn path of wasted life. If you select to be the runners, then at the end of the year you should be able to measure the advance you have made upon the Path. At the end of the new year—nay, at the end of each new day—there should be a conscious knowledge, born of deliberate thought and action, of your progress or retardation.

There is always understanding, forgiveness and sympathy for those who fail in their struggle; but there can never be any toleration or compassion for those who, knowing full well the purpose of life, waste their time in pursuing the by-paths that lead away from the main road. There is a joy and an excitement in struggling with one's own nature, in watching its weaknesses and successfully checking them, in knowing one's strength

and bravely testing it, in knowing the capacity of will and developing it further. There should be no relaxation —none of the peace, the contentment, which are born of a horrible and loathsome self-satisfaction; no weakening or slackening of the constant watchfulness of oneself. Yet, at the same time, there should be no self-centredness, and above all there should be no vanity of self-approval, born of little pious deeds and thoughts. Beware of conceit and superciliousness. Be great as the heavens, but stoop like the heavens to the level of common earth and never, in your highest triumphs, disdain the struggler still entangled in the undergrowth of petty things.

A life so strenuous, yet so considerate and humble, led from day to day without relapse or relaxation, would be of the highest value, not only for each one of us, but also—and this is far more important—for the movement to which we belong. We can easily imagine the

influence and the power of the real spirituality that comes to those who, pondering constantly upon the value of evolution and self-perfection, put their thought as constantly into practice. If every member of the Star throughout the world were to determine to do these two things, then the Star would be worthily represented in the world, and we should be individually and collectively a potent factor in the coming reconstruction of the world-order, in preparing mankind to understand and to practise the simple and divine truths.

But alas, we mean well, but we fail in purposefulness. We are like the man who, at the beginning of every new year, resolves either to do or to give up doing a certain thing; and then, in the course of a few days, or weeks, or months, gives up the effort and falls back into the very condition which, in a moment of enthusiasm, he regretted. The greatest difficulty that we all find is to maintain continu-

ously that elation and that enthusiasm which are aroused in moments of intense aspiration. The enthusiasm and the elation are well enough, and every new year ought to give us the occasion for these. But they are useless—nay, in many ways harmful—if they last only for a short while and then flicker out. At least we should try to sustain them for a whole year, when, at the appropriate season, they can be kindled again.

All this can only be achieved by the constant thought of our purpose in life; and the responsibility lies with those who have once felt, however dimly, the spiritual energy that exists behind the Star. We have all felt it, and we all know it to be undeniably true. Knowing and feeling this stupendous energy, we cannot and must not remain, individually or collectively, merely accumulators of power, but must become forceful users of it in the service of evolution. Nay, we must do more than this; we must become, as it

were, evolution itself. We must be the evolutionary stream, carrying with us the weak and the strong, forcing our way through and stirring up the sluggish backwaters, in which the many have been caught, and pushing them into the main current. This is supremely necessary at the present time. For there come periods in the long story of Man's unfolding, when old standards of thought and action must be replaced by new and greater requirements, or else the world must perish. In offering ourselves as instruments for the work, we must realise to the full all that evolution implies. We must realise the stages of humanity's progress along the appointed path which leads it to its final goal. We must understand, in some measure, where humanity stands at the moment and we must have, however dimly, the vision of the future. Only when we possess such knowledge, intuitively or otherwise, can we help in bringing to birth the new ideals of which the world is in

need. Nor is such knowledge, in itself, sufficient. It must be accompanied by a willingness—nay, an intense desire—to change ourselves first, and then only our neighbours. Given these things, then, the attitude towards life, which is the outcome of the new ideals, will bring with it a quite extraordinary happiness, and will make progress swift and easy. But the new outlook will not be easy to understand at first, for its very simplicity and directness will be strange to the acquired thought-habits of our present stage in growth.

III.

Star members, though some of them may be of the new generation, can, through gradual and not too slow assimilation of the new spiritual ideas, bring about a radical change in their surroundings. We have all noticed how a really happy man dispels the gloom and

depression of those around him. In the same way, when we have learned to embody the new standards and the new attitude, then, wherever we may go, our influence and our happiness will be felt and will encourage others who are struggling to find happiness. But, as I have already said, we must not think that the task of gaining the new attitude is easy, or that we, as Star members, possess any special privileges.

Though our belief in the coming of the Great Teacher should give us a great strength and encouragement, a deep feeling of responsibility, and an intuitive happiness, yet the belief is not enough in itself. The desire to attain the new attitude, and to be happy in the real sense, must be born within each one of us individually. And it will be born, because the Star has enabled us to realise our own intrinsic greatness, and the greatness of the goal which lies before us; because we have seen for ourselves, however

dimly, the Teacher of all beings; and because we have felt the Divinity that stirs in all things animate and inanimate, and have appreciated the real beauty of life. Outside influences and the reading of many books may have superficial effects on us, but the vital and complete change can only come when we realise for ourselves the impelling necessity of the coming reformation.

The light of the Truth can only grow as we ourselves grow. We can hasten or retard the process; it can be encouraged or held back by outer circumstances and opportunities. But never forget that, in the last resort, the discovery of every spiritual truth must be made *by* ourselves *for* ourselves. If we depend for the knowledge of life on other people, on books, or on lectures, we shall never find it, though we may be helped by these means in appropriate ways. The desire, the longing for truth and for spirituality, must be born within us. They must be

part of us; only then can we follow the Great Teacher as men who *know* and who, by reason of that knowledge, are capable of standing alone.

When He comes He will show us the new standard and the new attitude. But what shall it avail us, if we cannot even now perceive dimly of what nature these things are? For now is the time to prepare ourselves. He would be a fool who, knowing of the coming hurricane, took no heed of the ominous signs, and forbore to repair the roof of his ancient house. So it is with us, too. We of the Star are well aware of the approaching changes, and of the coming severances of those who know from those who do not know; of those who are striving to serve the world, and those who are well content with their own narrow selfishness. This is the period, brief and strenuous, before the severance comes, in which to discover our strength and our weakness. This is the time to remould our attitude,

to take stock of our new ideals. For this reason, it is essential that all of us who have joined the Self-Preparation Group should clearly understand what we have undertaken, and the responsibility which rests upon every single member. For we are, as it were, the vanguard of the host, and the new standard is our oriflamme, the honour of which has been entrusted to our hands. That being so, consider what it behoves you to be.

Be the great helpers yourselves, and not

merely receivers of help.

Be fighters for the Star, and not merely the camp-followers of a great movement.

Be happy, but never content.

The Path

I.

IT is my intention that this Group shall be composed entirely of those who have but one desire, one thought, and one purpose in life—to tread the Noble Path that leads to glorious enlightenment and to perfect peace. They must be prepared to sacrifice themselves utterly for their ideals, to attain their goal at all costs, irrespective of everyone and everything. They must be prepared to give up their petty personalities for the great work, and to carry out in their daily lives the teachings and the knowledge that they may obtain in years to come. Their purpose in life must be to become perfect by following the plan of

God for humanity, and to achieve that perfection as soon as possible. Their whole life, their entire energy, their utter devotion, however small or great, must be consecrated in sacrifice at the altar of the Master. In fact, they must be able to give up their love, their life, their very being, to the Great Teacher.

The ancient teaching remains eternally the same. The Law does not change; it is permanent and immutable. It is only we who change. We have wandered far from the truth, and we are walking ignorantly and carelessly on the path of little knowledge and of passing happiness. Do not let us waste our energies in discussing how and why we come hither. The whole world, except the happy few, has strayed from the original and noble Path. Let us rather consider how we can retrace our steps, for the entire world must eventually return to this sacred way.

The sooner we realise this fact, the quicker shall our feet be cleansed of mire, and the quicker shall we reach the Path of eternal happiness.

In order to help humanity to break away from untruth and unreality, we have formed this Group. It will thus be seen by the thoughtful how great is its importance, how great the responsibility that rests on all who decide to join it. It will also become very clear why I insist so very often upon this fundamental fact, namely, that, if the members are not prepared to carry out the spiritual teachings, it would be kinder and more helpful of them not to join the Group and stand in the way of those who wish to make progress. I am not so intolerant as to wish to force any individual into this Group; at the same time, I do not desire that it should fail because of those who join merely out of curiosity. I would beg all members who join to bear this constantly in mind. We mean

business, and those who do not had better stay out of the Group altogether. There are other ways within the Order in which members can employ their energy and enthusiasm, ways which are equally important. What is required is that the work should be done. In that work there is no distinction of kind; there is no distinction of privilege or degree. The Great Being is the absolute judge, and He judges according to the service and the love that we extend towards humanity. For Him, it is the work alone that counts, and individuals with their troublesome personalities are of no consequence. With this fact made absolutely clear to ourselves, let us proceed, and do not let us forget it.

II.

If we are to make any advance along the Path of spirituality, it is essential that we should begin from the very beginning, from the very first step. The

more magnificent the structure, the firmer and stronger has to be the foundation; the deeper and more solid the foundation, the higher and nobler will be the edifice. Too often spirituality has been misunderstood, being thought of as something vague and dreamy, a thing that disappears in the mystic clouds of our imagination, something utterly impracticable—nay, (strange thought!) something that is within the realm of the aged, the last hope of the dying, and the final resource of the helpless. How utterly wrong are all these conceptions! Than spirituality there is nothing more practical and nothing more definite. If we are impractical, we are not spiritual; nor are we spiritual when we are negative. Spirituality is the natural outcome of joy and happiness, but not of the joy and happiness of contentment and self-satisfaction, for along that path lies stagnation. It is the healthy, the strong and the beautiful that are capable of entering the mighty portals of spiritual-

ity. It does not lie close to the failures, but is within the grasp of the one who is successful. He who is throbbing with energy, he who is capable of fierce enthusiasm, he is the beloved of the Mighty; and dearer than all these is he who loves with utter devotion.

Care of the Physical Body

I.

“Spiritual regeneration is possible only through physical regeneration.”

IT is of the utmost importance, for us who intend to tread the sacred Path, to understand the vital necessity for the perfecting of our physical bodies. There has been from time immemorial an unfortunate misconception that spirituality could only be gained through mortification and through physical pain; one finds this erroneous idea very prevalent in all countries, civilized or uncivilized, and even practised with enthusiasm and utter self-abnegation. The old saints of Christian countries indulged in this form of supposed spiritual progress. In India one finds, even

to this day, men and women, strong in devotion, with an unconquerable will, and with unquenchable thirst for the Truth, inflicting on themselves unimaginable pain in all kinds of ways, in the certain belief that they are thereby the more rapidly approaching the sacred portals of divinity.

To be clean, to be healthy, or to have a smile on the lips, has been too frequently considered to be contrary to the edicts of spirituality; whereas to wear dirty and worm-eaten sack-cloth, polluting God's fresh air; to be unwashed and filthy, nauseating and repellent; to be unkempt with the dirt of ages, and disgusting to behold; to be weak and pitiable, groaning with physical pain; to be frail and without energy; to be haggard and worn out; this has been held up as a sacrifice upon which the Gods smile with approbation and encouragement. To be unhappy, with shadows of misfortune ever on the face, with never a smile or a thrill at the sight of beauty; joyless and mirthless—such has

been thought to be the Path that leads to the abode of enlightenment. Such misconceptions have crowned with shame the glory of spirituality.

One can perceive how this absurd idea grew fashionable among the seekers of a pure and noble life. It came as a revolt against the enfeebling luxury and self-indulgence of a pagan world, where the body was glorified at the expense of the soul. The slogan, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," drove the religiously-minded into the opposite extreme, and caused them to adopt as their motto, "Let us neither eat nor drink, in order that by mortifying our corrupt affections now, hereafter we may live." Even to this day, in India, it is looked upon by some as very worldly and not at all spiritual for a "holy man" to be clean.

We have lost ourselves, as I have so often repeated, in a world of small and

unimportant things, and hence we lose sight of the relative value and the right proportion of any teaching given by the sages of the past. We are always willing—in fact it is easier, though it may sound somewhat paradoxical—to follow either one or the other of the extremes, or to belong to one or other of the “pairs of opposites.” The pendulum swings between the two extremes, because it is inconceivably difficult to walk in the “*via sacra*,” the “*via media*”—the middle path, for that is the only true Path to which all other paths lead. Between the extremes the aspirant must struggle to keep his balance, using, with infinite care and patience, his commonsense.

The difficulty lies, for most of us, in disentangling ourselves from the old superstitious ideas of spirituality. Austerity, carried to its bitter end, does not lead us, as is supposed, to the ultimate goal of holiness, nor does extravagant luxury and fatty degeneration of our moral being

lead us to happiness. Our spiritual regeneration can only be found along the middle path, the Path which all great Teachers have followed, and which the Lord Gautama Buddha declared to be the noblest of all.

“Throughout the moral history of mankind there are two distinct ideals, either of which it is possible to maintain—two conceptions, under one or the other of which we may represent to ourselves men’s efforts towards a better life—corresponding to those two contrasted aspects as discernible in the picture afforded by the New Testament itself of the character of Christ. The idea of asceticism represents moral effort as essentially a sacrifice, the sacrifice of one part of human nature to another, that it may live the more completely in what survives of it; while the ideal of culture represents it as an harmonious development of all the parts of human nature, in just proportion to each other.”*

*Walter Pater. *Marius the Epicurean*.

Spirituality is not a flower that can flourish, if cut off from the natural desires and emotions of the physical, moral or mental worlds. The liberation and the perfecting of the soul is possible only through the even and harmonious development of all the vehicles. We cannot advance along the Noble Path, if one of the opposites is to be cultivated at the expense of the other. Desires, like most things, are means to an end, and not an end in themselves. The gratification of our emotions and longings, without the least thought of the consequences either to ourselves or to our neighbour, does not take us to our goal. We can reach that goal only by learning, through pain, through sacrifice, and through ceaseless effort to transmute our desires, base and fleeting, into the creative force which ultimately gives us the opportunity to free ourselves from the thralldom of unhappiness.

The true light will only shine forth when we have escaped from all desires, save the desire to be like Him.

II.

In order to be spiritual, we need to be joyful, practical and definite; another necessary qualification, if we are striving to attain the Path, is good health, physical first and later mental. For the present we are on the physical plane, and our first duty is to conquer it. Our body is the apotheosis of all that is magnificent on this plane, but through neglect and misuse it has become degraded, and we look upon life through perverted eyes. The first thing for us to do is to train the body to regain its health and vigour; for our mental activity and our outlook on life depend largely on the condition of our physical health. If we are healthy and strong, there is a greater certainty of our acquiring the right

attitude, although naturally this result does not always follow. Later I intend to go more fully into this question, but here I shall only briefly mention the importance of having a perfectly healthy physical body.

It is well understood that physical well-being is of the utmost necessity, if there is to be a corresponding mental activity. If the body is weak and unhealthy, then the mental and moral standard is likewise lowered. Since thought is the governing factor in our daily life, and since thought is dependent on health, it is the duty of every one of us to have a strong, but not brutish, physical body. Most of us have some sort of small ailment that constantly perverts our thought, and hence prevents us from following the right Path. Most of our wrong and petty thoughts can undoubtedly be attributed to ill-health; and if we intend to tread the Path, we must be incapable of wrong and petty

thought. The better our health, the more opportunity we have for spiritual progress, for our minds are in that case not so prone to wrong conceptions and ideas.

To enter into the kingdom of spirituality, it is absolutely essential to understand, as far as we can, this world of the physical, and to have vigorous, strong and healthy bodies. We must make every effort to attain this perfection without in any way jeopardising our principles, keeping always in mind that the true perfection, either physical or spiritual, can only be gained by the sacrifice of personal desires and by always keeping the goal constantly before us. If we are going to tread the Path of spirituality, we must evolve step by step, neglecting nothing, however small and unimportant it may seem to be. We cannot arrive at the height of divinity without walking along the straight and narrow path of simplicity. If we are to arrive at the dazzling summit of the

mountain, we must pass through dark and fearsome valleys of sorrow; we must wade through rivers of misfortune; but we must always keep the bright vision of the mountain top. We must have strong and hardened feet and a wise head, if we wish to tread the Path; and to gain that, we must exercise and cultivate ourselves. Neglect nothing and gain everything.

Like a well-trained race-horse should our bodies be, responding to the slightest touch, and under perfect control. We should be the masters of our bodies and not, as in so many cases, be mastered by our desires and whims, likes and dislikes, passions and cravings. There should be no other voice in control but that of our real and true self; and when it has once spoken, there must be no yielding — it should be in command absolutely and completely.

The establishing of that true self is the most difficult, and yet the most

important task that lies ahead of us. The ability to hear its faint voice can only be gained by a constant watchfulness, and when once we have caught its whisper, we must act unhesitatingly and uncompromisingly. Thus we learn to encourage it, to make that voice stronger and more powerful, and so, as time goes on, to make it the one unquestioned and unchallenged ruler of our lives.

III.

It will thus be seen that one of the necessary bases of spiritual well-being is physical well-being; and whatever may be the school of spirituality that we follow, one of the first requirements in every one of them is that we should have a clean, strong and healthy physical body.

Every Teacher who has come to help humanity, has laid it down as a funda-

mental rule for His pupils, that they must have a body which is of the highest type, which will respond to the finer and nobler vibrations, which will be under perfect control, and, above all, which will be strong and healthy. For if we possess such a body, most of the other qualities can be gained with comparative ease.

IV.

I do not think we quite realise the importance, indeed the absolute necessity, of having a perfect and normal physical body. The final attainment of spirituality and enlightenment can only be achieved through the possession of a perfect physical body, a perfect emotional body, and a perfect mental body. It will be seen that it is our duty, if we are going to tread the Path, to do everything in our power to gain the

first step upon the ladder of evolution. The savage has a magnificent physique; health is with him a matter of instinct and habit, as with the wild beast of the forest.

The purpose both of the savage and of the beast is to satisfy the cravings of their bodies, and they have no other thought in life than to be physically strong and cruelly cunning, so as to obtain the necessary sustenance for their bodies. We are higher in evolution than the savage and the brutish animal, but we have not as yet realised one of the essential rules on the Path which leads towards perfection. Our aim is to become eventually like the Great Beings in all things.

The Masters are our examples, and we must copy Them. Their bodies are perfect, glorious and resplendent. They have carefully studied, scientifically and individually, the absolute requirements of Their bodies, neither giving them too much nor

too little food, neither too much nor too little sleep, neither too much nor too little exercise. In fact, Their bodies are a perfect expression, so far as physical matter permits, of Their spiritual attainment. Their bodies are beautiful to look upon, and in Them there is joy and divinity. The mere outward body is so inspiring and so exquisite that one can worship the very vehicles which They use. To Them the evolution of the body, relatively speaking, is as important as the evolution of the soul.

It is essential for those who intend to follow the Noble Path eventually to become vegetarians, and to be strong in this determination. The two principal reasons are *ethical* and *physical*. Let us examine these two reasons briefly, without going into details.

Ethical.

The eating of flesh and fish involves the taking of life, often with cruelty; and an

attitude of mind which tolerates this wholesale slaughter of millions of defenceless creatures, in order to satisfy a barbarous craving which has become a need through custom, must eventually induce a callous indifference towards suffering as a whole, and deaden the tender compassion which always characterizes the spiritual man. I have heard many devoutly religious people maintain that animals were created for the express purpose of being slaughtered for our supposed needs.

It is well-known that feeding a dog on meat tends to excite his temper and to make him vicious. It is no exaggeration to say that the same principle can be applied to humanity. The indirect cruelty which begins at a very early age, when parents bring up their children on meat, makes most nations of the world barbarous at heart, though they may be clothed in civilized garb. *Ahimsa*, the quality of harmlessness, must eventually be gained by mankind.

History shows us the various degrees of cruelty which we have passed through and left behind; and it will be but a few short years before we shall look upon the cruelty involved in meat-eating with the same horror which fills us in glancing back at the days when torture was the common practice. We must arrive at the stage when our minds are moved to compassion at the thought of *all* cruelty, whether it be before our very eyes, or inflicted far away for our benefit. This compassion must be of a nature which arouses an unyielding determination not to share, even in the smallest degree, in the continuance of such wholesale cruelty.

Physical.

I have already said that those of us who are aspiring to tread the Path should possess bodies which are capable of responding to the higher and nobler vibrations. The eating of flesh is magnetically impure, and invariably coarsens our physi-

cal bodies, deadening their capacity to respond to the higher vibrations.

By eating meat, we place one more barrier in the way of our becoming fit instruments of the Great Teacher; and it is our duty in this Group to discover with care all the obstacles which stand in our way, and to remove them ruthlessly.

Therefore, I would urge every member of this Group to consider this first step. When once they have arrived at the unalterable decision to give up meat, they should set about to find out—each with a view to his own case—the best course to follow in order to achieve their purpose. It is known that vegetarianism, taken up unwisely and precipitately, is dangerous to the body. I suggest, therefore, that those who are in doubt should consult a dietetist who has firm vegetarian convictions, and who can, if possible, supervise the patient in the transition period.

Personally, having been a vegetarian all my life, and having lived a great part of my life in countries where vegetarianism is considered a foolish fad, I have suffered a great deal, and what I have learned is from personal experience.

We have over-civilized our food and violated natural laws. We have become so self-indulgent that, instead of looking upon food as one of the elements in the care of the body, many — and indeed the majority — consider eating as one of the main pleasures of life.

Meditation

I.

MEDITATION is of the highest value, and absolutely necessary for a beginner who wishes to train himself along the spiritual Path. Few of us are capable of controlling our minds and thoughts; few of us indeed have succeeded in concentrating upon one particular thought for any length of time. But those who wish to tread the Path of Discipleship must realise that one of the first requirements for a pupil is that he should be able to control his thoughts, that he should not let vague and indefinite thoughts master him.

To achieve this very difficult task, for it is difficult and very tiresome as I well

know, we should spend time and energy in the absolute mastery of all stray thoughts.

Every pupil, throughout the long and interminable ages of suffering, has been taught, sometimes secretly and sometimes openly, the complicated process of meditation.

The system adopted by the Teacher depended upon the evolution and the capacity of the pupil; and the Teacher was always in personal contact with his disciple, and carefully watched his unfoldment. This is but natural.

A professor can watch over and direct the studies of his students, when they are limited in number and he knows them personally, but he would be unwise to guide his scholars in a complicated and intricate study, without being personally acquainted with them. He can advise them to study along general lines, but he cannot particularise.

Likewise, it would be dangerous in any way to prescribe a system or a particular form of meditation, without knowing whether a particular individual is likely, in his eagerness and ignorance, to misunderstand and misuse it. Hence it is obvious that we can only generalize along broad and simple lines.

We must also bear in mind that races, like individuals, have their own peculiarities. Let us take, for example, the American race. They are very nervous and highly strung; what they undertake they are apt to do wholeheartedly; they have sensitive bodies, and, unfortunately, with this there is a facile tendency to psychism.

So anyone who would give instructions in meditation has to remember the varying characteristics and multitudinous temperaments of each race.

II.

We have, among the members of the Self-Preparation Group, two distinct classes of individuals: those who belong to the Eastern School of the Theosophical Society, and those who do not. The former have their own system of meditation, to which they must strictly adhere, and to which, usually, they cannot add any other system. To this group of people, then, we do not give here any instructions with regard to their own special meditation. We address ourselves only to that body of people who are Star members, and who do not already practise another system of meditation. But I would suggest to those members of the Eastern School, who belong to this Group, to take part in the daily aspiration, as this does not interfere with their meditation in the Eastern School.

III.

Here I wish to lay down the general lines of meditation which should be followed by *all* the Group members, *except* those who belong to the Eastern School. It may be advisable and advantageous to change the whole form of meditation later on. So this is not a final, nor by any means a lasting system, and members should be prepared to alter the course of their meditation if, later on, such a change is considered necessary.

Meditation, if properly practised, is most beneficial, is of the highest value in its purifying effects, and ennobles the vision of the individual; but if it is not properly carried out, it can become very dangerous, leading to many complications, and finally bringing about that form of psychism which is futile, petty and absurd. This has often been the case in America.

Against this we must be extremely careful to guard, stopping all meditation immediately at the first symptom of trouble in the form of headaches, hearing voices, etc.

The dangerous side of meditation cannot be emphasized too strongly. Do not think that you are an exceptional individual, and that you have a special work to do in the world; for any form of meditation done in this conceited state of mind will surely lead to disaster. Use commonsense, be sane, and do not take any risks which might eventually lead to some form of mental derangement.

At the present moment, I am going to confine myself strictly to a very simple form of meditation, which can be practised regularly by a beginner. Set apart a room or, if that is not possible, a special place to which you can retire; but of course, of the two, a room would be better. It must be quiet, well-lighted, and above all, scrupulously clean. Do not have it

heavily curtained or luxurious. The simpler and the more dignified it is, the more worthy will it become as a place of worship. Sit in a comfortable posture, either in a chair or on a rug especially set apart for this purpose. The essential thing is that the body should be completely at ease and relaxed; to achieve this end do what is necessary. Only, do not go to sleep! Try to keep the body as quiet and peaceful as possible. Sit always in the same posture which you have found to be the most comfortable, and best suited to your body. Sit always facing the East.

Have in front of you, if you so desire and find it helpful, a picture of the Christ, Shri Krishna, or any other Teacher who may happen to inspire you. Naturally the choice of the picture will be partly determined by the religion to which you belong. After you have harmonized your surroundings with your ideal, begin to concentrate your mind on the Master.

We, who are members of the Star, have of course a special privilege—that of meditating upon the World-Teacher. We shall find, if we are worthy of such a blessing, that our meditation will have a peculiarly purifying effect upon our minds and our emotions; gradually our conception of life will undergo a complete change.

We should remember that the Order of the Star in the East, as a whole, has at its disposal a certain reservoir of spiritual force which can be utilized by every member, if he is capable of rising out of the lower conditions which imprison him. Not only can we draw upon this reservoir, but we can also add to it, and must do so.

The devotion which wells up within us must be, not a wave of sentimentality, as is often the case, and which is of little use, but a stream of concentrated aspiration, charged with a definite purpose. That is to say, it should be intended either as an

offering, which shall take us out of ourselves and make us His instruments, or as a force which shall purify us and make us better disciples.

IV.

The whole purpose of the Self-Preparation Group, and particularly of meditation, is to encourage members to take the first steps on the long Path which leads to Discipleship.

As I have already said before, and as we cannot repeat to ourselves too often, the first and foremost requirement is the ruthless, grim and unchanging determination to achieve Discipleship.

For this purpose we must put a stop to all the wasteful dissipation of energy which recurs so constantly through our ignorance and sheer thoughtlessness. This

brings about the narrowing down of our purpose in life, the restraining of all stray whims and indulgences, and the curbing of our desire for useless experiences. Even though we may have been wasting time in the by-ways of life, we must now make the winding paths merge into the main road which we have determined to follow.

Every morning, then, this determination should be made afresh, so that during the day every failure, every lapse, shall automatically bring it to the forefront of the mind. At night, before sleep, we should review our day critically, impersonally and unsparingly, congratulating ourselves upon our successes, and noting without the least depression or morbidity, our failures. Meditation should consist, first, in an effort to cleanse and harmonize emotions and thoughts, and then in the daily affirmation of the purpose to which we have dedicated our lives. After this should come introspection, by which I mean the dwelling on the positive side of the failings and weak-

nesses which we have discovered in ourselves, and upon the qualifications that will help to destroy those weaknesses. Then should follow the dedication to the Teacher of all the thoughts, emotions and actions, both small and great. Finally will come exaltation; but few are capable of all that this word implies. Even weak sentimentality is a feeble beginning which, when purged from self, strengthened, concentrated and spiritualized, will ultimately lead us to that supreme height where, as the Lord said, dwells he who "sits certain of Me, enlightened, Mine own, the true of heart, the faithful, stayed on Me, taking Me as his utmost blessedness—he is not Mine, but I—even

I Myself, that man who sayeth

'All is Vasudev.' "

Ceremonial

I.

LET us bear in mind, from the very beginning, that the question of ceremonial has puzzled the world, and has created much foolish antagonism throughout the ages. It has aroused interminable controversies, and caused much hatred, cruelty and brutal intolerance; and each of us bears, consciously or unconsciously, this heritage of the past.

We either like and revel in ceremonies, or we remain puritanical, haughty and superior, disgusted with those who are of a different temperament. The prejudice on both sides is deeply rooted and unshakable. From this narrow attitude of mind there

arises a peculiar distaste for opinions which are diametrically opposed to our own. Ceremonial and ritual of any kind call out in us all, either deep admiration and devotion, or profound distrust and antagonism, depending on the particular Ray to which we belong.

I have known some very sincere people, possessing an intelligent understanding of life, to lose their commonsense when faced by problems of ceremonial. They suddenly develop a strong spirit of intolerance, and a bitter animus against even their friends, because these have discovered that ceremonial is their special line of work.

If we look around us in the world, we shall find that the strongest qualities which humanity has developed with persistence throughout the ages, are prejudice and intolerance. Born out of ignorance and complete lack of sympathy, these two have swayed the world, causing every kind of harm and

agony. The origin of every kind of evil or misfortune can, with great certainty, be traced to prejudice and to ignorance. There is only one good—Knowledge; there is only one evil—Ignorance.

The greatest faults which a man can have are the lack of understanding, and the incapacity to see his own ignorance. Lord Buddha ever maintained that there was no greater hindrance to the evolution of man than ignorance, and He urged His followers to be constantly battling against that demon of darkness. He bade them never to relax, even for an instant, in that inward search for the reality that shall dispel the dark clouds of ignorance, that shall open to the seeker the door of knowledge, and that shall release him from the wheel of woe. Every Teacher has declared that prejudice and ignorance, in whatever degree, are the main sources of man's unhappiness.

Now, in order to disentangle oneself from the embrace of ignorance, it is of no value whatever to read books of so-called knowledge. These only give the reader a superficial understanding of the realities, and sometimes even befog his already clouded mind. We, who are trying to lead a different life from that of ordinary individuals, who are attempting to set a new standard, and are endeavouring to tread the Path, must acquire knowledge not only from books, but from the struggles of every-day life, from self-scrutiny, and from meditating with the purpose of destroying any false conceptions and prejudices that we may have.

The essential thing to realise, for each one of us, is that there is very little time at our disposal for the unfoldment of our character, that we cannot wait for the outside world and circumstances to knock us into shape, which is what happens with most people; that we must

create a hammer of our own which shall shape us without mercy, ceaselessly, and without any regard to our personal feelings; that the wheel of evolution is turning, and that it is in our power to make it go fast or slow, and that the world is unconsciously looking at us in our experimental stage.

Let us realise these fundamental facts; and then the various problems that confront us in our daily life will not loom up as something that we have to get around by various tricks, but they will assume their proper value in training us to attain our goal. I think there is a sad lack of humour amongst us, and this becomes very apparent when we take things wrongly and ourselves too seriously.

To get back to the question of ceremonial. In the Order—in fact in any international movement—there are as many different types and temperaments as there are stars in the heavens; and if

we let ignorance or prejudice have its way without restraint, we shall make ourselves not only thoroughly unpleasant, but we shall also wreck the organization to which we belong. That is the reason why we have to be extremely cautious with regard to ceremonial within the Order.

Do not let us waste our energies by foolish disputes or ceaseless wrangles over this question of ceremonial. You may be a ritualist or not, but treat the opinions of others with respect. Do not let your prejudice, whatever it may be, blind you so utterly that you are incapable of laughing at yourself.

I remember, a few years ago, I was at a meeting where one party was most unfairly attacking another party which happened, unfortunately, to disagree with the other about ceremonial. It was quite Gilbertian! The attacking party was non-ritualistic, and every crime imaginable and

unimaginable was charged to the account of the other side; every action was interpreted as an effort to make the whole world ceremonialist; every gesture was the outcome of some deep plot, and so on for an interminable time.

After the meeting was over, the ceremonialists remained rooted in their conviction that they were following the right Path of evolution, whereas the non-ceremonialists were equally convinced that their antagonists were hastening with all speed to the Devil.

At that meeting there were a lot of young people present, and they thoroughly enjoyed themselves! Life does not become complicated when one is young, or when one can laugh at the humorous side of things. But let prejudice begin to play its part, and life becomes intricate.

As we become older, we seem to settle down comfortably in our deep ruts of prejudice and intolerance, and woe to him that dares to disturb us in our tranquility born of ignorance. As we grow older, we build walls around us with diligent care, to guard us from anything that might destroy our self-satisfaction and contentment. We are only interested in following our own narrow path, intensely distrustful of the broader and more open path of others.

Whether we are ceremonialists or not, let us bear in mind that whatever we may do, we must always be worthy of the Star, dignified and great.

The numerous rituals which are now being used in the Order cannot all be called either great or dignified; they are, with the exception of one or two, rather infantile, if I may say so, and they do not inspire us with enthusiasm or devotion, which all rituals should do.

The other day, I was given a number of rituals to consider. There was nothing of great value, nor was there any great harm in them. They were all mediocre, and not, in my opinion, worthy of the Star. They were all reminiscent of that curiously small and sanctimonious form of worship, which tends to make our thoughts and emotions narrow and barren, without bringing about the necessary stimulation of thought and emotion which ceremonies of any kind are intended to do.

It is true that the spiritual energy of the Star will work through them, as long as members are gathered together who are willing to train themselves for the work of the Teacher, and who have a common ideal. This energy, naturally, can be made either more powerful and effective, or less, depending along what channels it is made to flow.

Please do not think that I am against

ceremonial; but I would urge you to think of the impression that an inferior ceremonial might make on those who have just joined the Order, and also on the general public. We must guard against unnecessary ridicule, for it does injury to our cause and to our work. I am well aware that it is extremely easy to criticize, without giving any constructive suggestions with regard to ceremonial.

Obviously, there is a growing necessity for some kind of ritual within the Order for those who are ceremonially inclined, and this need must be satisfied. The Order as a whole cannot, and must not at present have a ceremony in which all members are required to participate, as in the Order there are all types of people; but for those whose evolution lies along the ceremonial path, we must find in time a suitable ritual, dignified and worthy of the Star.

We have to go into the matter very seriously to discover which is the best of the existing rituals. This takes time. In the meanwhile, if I may suggest, members who are so inclined should continue with those rituals they use already now.

I want again to point out the absolute necessity for grave dignity and simple beauty in any ritual they may use. But they must also not be too much attached to ceremonial. Ceremonial is a means, and not an end in itself. They ought to be ready to "scrap" any ritual, if it hinders the usefulness of members, and prevents the growth of the Lord's work.

Our purpose, whatever we may undertake, must be to simplify and make perfect the channels that are being employed for spiritual energy, and if we adopt this way of looking at all things that are essential for the well-being of humanity, the various problems that confront us to-day will be solved.

Ceremonial must be acknowledged by all thinking men as being a channel for enlarging the consciousness of man, and for his purification. Naturally this applies to all those who are very strongly inclined towards ceremonial and ritual. We have, now-a-days, an unfortunate habit of plunging into activities which do not particularly suit our temperaments, and after taking such a step, we regret it, and become a source of trouble and discord.

We have not yet learnt that intelligent co-operation with another temperament does not mean that we have to assume the robes of that temperament, but that we have to understand the constitution of another, and help him to achieve his goal along his own particular line.

If we desire to help another whose nature is different from ours, we have to treat him along his own line, and not force him to accept our mode of thought, nor

should we subjugate our characteristics to his; so shall we acquire the habit—for it is but a habit—of treating those who are intrinsically different from ourselves in the spirit that the Teacher would adopt towards all of us. It is so simple that one often wonders why certain individuals persecute and scoff at others whose nature is different from their own; it is almost impossible to imagine what our position would be, if the Teacher adopted such a narrow attitude towards us.

We often say that every man or woman is entitled to his or her own opinion; but when they exercise that opinion in opposition to ours, our whole emotional nature rises in revolt, and we rather wish to hurl something at them, or to protest and argue till we have won them to our point of view. The distress felt by many over views differing from their own is very keen, and it is a distress difficult to heal.

Tolerance only comes when a man has

achieved a certain amount of mental and emotional control, and each one of us has to go through the mill of deliberate suffering before he can achieve this calm restraint of weakness. This weakness of desiring everyone to be exactly like ourselves is never so easily betrayed as when we are performing rituals or ceremonies.

For this reason, we have to safeguard ourselves carefully against ourselves; for this reason there is so much unaccountable trouble with narrow-minded people; and so we must consider carefully the wisdom of authorizing a ritual for general use within the Order. In our movement we have every kind of temperament: the fanatic, and the calm thinker; the devotee, and the one who expresses himself through action; the ceremonialist, and the non-ceremonialist. But fortunately for us, our belief in the Teacher is so strong that, with all our varying characteristics, we can still stand by each other.

Our Place in the Plan

I.

I have been asked many questions with regard to a statement once made in these words:

“Each one of us must be ready to give up love, wife, children and even one’s very being for the Great Teacher.”

As many have not understood what I intended to convey, I must give an explanation. How far they have misunderstood me, will be seen by the fact that I have received letters saying that the writers could not give up their children, as these were very young and needed their mothers,

and that a Great Teacher would not ask of them such a cruel sacrifice. Was it necessary to give up their husbands or their children before they could join the Self-Preparation Group? And if they already belonged to it, must they resign because they could not undertake to do any such thing?

It is a common occurrence now-a-days for a son to quarrel with his father and mother, because they strongly disapprove of his choice of a wife. He leaves them and follows his own desires, irrespective of any individual, and is only satisfied when he has attained his end.

Our goal is to serve the Great Teacher, and everything which *interferes* with that purpose must be set aside.

But we should use in all things, at all times, the divine quality of commonsense. Naturally, each one of us must judge for himself what the obstacles are that stand

in the way of our becoming perfect disciples; and it is impossible for any one else to point out the barrier that keeps us back. For what may be a barrier for one, may be of the greatest help to another. All barriers and obstacles are, each in its own way, essential for evolution.

All schools of spirituality and occultism help and train the aspirants to distinguish and to judge for themselves between the essential and the non-essential in daily life. All point out the Path that leads to enlightenment; but the treading of that Path depends upon the individual.

The Order of the Star in the East exists in the world to recognize the World-Teacher, and to follow that Divine Being. Recognition is born in us only when we are able to appreciate and understand the attitude of the Teacher, and the intense desire to follow comes only when we are burning with the longing to carry out literally, without

hesitation, the least whisper from Him that may reach our ears.

When the Divine Teacher is once again with us, we must be *capable* of translating for ourselves the Truth which He will proclaim, and we must be wise in the application of it to our daily lives.

He may, indeed, ask each one of us to give up that which we most dearly love, and our greatness will lie in the ability to answer to that demand with commonsense and appreciation. All that we should have, and the only thing that is of vital and utmost importance, is the *ability to do what is essential*.

Belief and determination should be our foundation. Before the Great Teacher comes, we must have developed the ability to do whatever is required of us. That is what I meant when I said we should be able to give up everything, even our very selves.

What said the Christ?

“Do not think that I am come
to send peace on earth.

I come not to send peace,
but a sword.

For I am come to set man at
variance against his father,
and the daughter against her
mother, and the daughter-in-
law against her mother-in-law.
He that loveth father or mo-
ther more than Me, is not wor-
thy of Me, and he that loveth
son or daughter more than Me,
is not worthy of Me.”

How many of us understand this, and
are capable of carrying it out? Prepare
yourself, and the task will be made easy.

“He that neither hateth nor loveth,
nor grieveth nor desireth,
renouncing good and evil,
full of devotion,
he is dear to Me.”

II.

I have heard from various countries that the Self-Preparation Group is a great success, and that the members are really taking a great interest in the work, and in themselves.

I am sure that Group members will be as glad to hear of this as I am, for we are beginning to realise the tremendous importance of training ourselves first before we can launch forth as reformers.

It is abundantly clear, from the manner in which the Star is slowly developing, that the Order is pre-eminently intended to gather together people who not only believe in the coming of a Great World-Teacher, but who are willing, wholeheartedly and enthusiastically, with judgment and commonsense, to train themselves along simple and direct lines.

It is becoming more and more evident that the Teacher must have individuals round Him who will know, at least, the rudimentary principles of spirituality, who will listen with a spirit of intelligent co-operation, who will not criticize without understanding, who will have broken down at least to some extent their strong walls of prejudice, and so have destroyed, again to some extent, the barrier that keeps them from becoming Gods.

His disciples will have to be people who will have destroyed the selfishness that brings unconscious egotism, and who will not, through ignorance and self-laudation, be incapable of using the great opportunities which He will offer. It is for this purpose, I think, that the Order of the Star in the East was founded; and the Self-Preparation Groups throughout the world should be centres where we can gather the old and the young, especially the latter, who will have but one purpose in life—to train themselves.

When one reads in the New Testament, one is struck, if I may say so, by the extraordinary conduct of the disciples of Jesus, and their innumerable questions. One sometimes wonders what we should say and do if placed in similar circumstances. Probably we should act more or less in the same way as they did. But let us hope that a new understanding of the whole question of spirituality will have been reached before the Teacher is amongst us, and that when He comes, there will be many who can follow Him.

The importance of the Self-Preparation Group will be seen if viewed in this light; and all of us will understand the great necessity for the training of real disciples, and the bringing together of all those who are really anxious to change their narrow lives and narrow outlook upon life. Let me point out, though I may be accused of repetition, that the mere outward knowledge of all these things is utterly useless, that the mere attending at Group meetings is futile,

and that the mere reading of books and articles is a great waste of time.

To a certain extent all these things are essential; but what is of greater necessity is the constant watchfulness of oneself, that one may avoid slipping back into the old rut from which one has with difficulty extricated oneself. I have been to meetings, where one meets "long-haired men and short-haired women" who listen intently, with agonized eyes of misery, who interpret the lecturer's words according to their own ideas and prejudices, and who still remain firmly settled in their own fads and extreme crankiness.

After all, the value of any meeting or gathering lies in the fact that the individual applies the words of the speaker to himself, and comes out of the lecture with a clearer perception of himself. That is the only value of any meeting or any lecture; and if we cannot derive any such benefit, it is far better not to go at all. A

comfortable chair and a book are far better.

If the Self-Preparation Group contains individuals who have not the real conception, or who have only a very vague idea of the true purpose of the Group, let me then most emphatically point out that they are wasting their time, and bringing discredit upon the Star and upon themselves.

The whole purpose of the Self-Preparation Group, as I pointed out, is to collect, eventually, individuals who are willing to follow the Teacher resolutely and one-pointedly, and so set a new standard of thought and life.

If they cannot do these things with the right attitude of mind and purpose, then I would beg of them to cease their membership in the Group. Nor should Group members have any false and preconceived ideas about the question of Self-Preparation.

We have not started this Group within the Order of the Star in the East to give the members a tabloid form of spirituality, merely to be swallowed. On the contrary, it has been started to collect together people who are willing to train themselves definitely, and to struggle continuously for that purpose. It would be fatal to have arm-chair occultists. Unless we belong to that extremely rare type which finds attainment through pure happiness, spirituality can only be achieved through ceaseless struggle, through the constant goading of a restless mind, and through infinite suffering.

If we belong to this Group, the struggle must be intensified, and not shirked. The goading must provide a creative destruction; we must not let it degenerate into destructive criticism. Similarly, the suffering must clear away the mists of selfish ignorance, and not make us callous and futile. The whole purpose of our life must be absolutely concentrated on the right

unfoldment of ourselves in our daily, and sometimes tiresome occupations, so that we may be able to understand and co-operate with the Teacher, and thus be better able to help in the reconstruction of the shattered world.

Hence the first and foremost necessity at the present moment for everybody, and especially for the Star members who wish to take part in the remoulding of a happier world, is to develop aright the mind and heart which we all, either through selfishness or through ignorance, have allowed to wither, so that we have lost the true perspective of thought and feeling.

As in the spring-time there is born that tremendous activity in what is apparently a dead branch of a tree, there should be in us, too, a great and conscious activity. For there is coming to us a Spring, the like of which there has never been, and woe to the plant that does not struggle and shoot out its green, tender leaves

in the joy and ecstasy of life. The dawn of the Spring can be seen by those who have been awake through the long night with eager watchfulness. The rays of the Coming Sun light up the faces of those who know.

III.

The time has come when every one of us ought to be trying to find out why he is here, and what is the definite plan which the Master has in view for him. I am convinced that each one of us has a definite part to play in the Great Plan, and we should be using our imagination to find out what that part may be. This will give us confidence and strength to change.

I, for myself, have absolute belief in what the Master wishes me to be. I am going to play a definite rôle, and to play

it properly, and there must be transformation and remoulding. I know that the Master requires certain things of me. He wants me to be selfless; He wants me to be capable along certain definite lines; He wants me to become a true disciple. I know this, because I have thought about it and worked for it, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously.

It is the same with each one of you, and it is your business to find out what the Master wants of you, and then to set about preparing yourselves as quickly as possible to realise it.

As a first step, you must make your belief stronger and more definite. If you really believe, even though you fail for the first year, for two years, for ten years, nevertheless, if your belief be strong enough, no amount of failure will shake it, and you will succeed in the end because you have seen, and known, and

worked. It is belief which determines the way you look at life, the way your mind works, your attitude towards everything. If you are a real fanatic in belief, you will become a disciple to-morrow.

So you have to find out how far your belief is real, or mere lip-service. Examine yourselves impersonally, and find out how far your strength will carry you, and where your weakness lies.

It is belief and desire which give us the capacity to change. It is they, too, which will make you strong when the hour of testing comes. For the breath of the Lord is like a rushing mighty wind. The time is coming when, in the nature of things, there must be segregation. If we are strong, we shall become stronger; if we are noble, we shall become more magnificent; but if we are weak, we shall go under; if we are sinners, we shall become more sinful. So we must train ourselves now, in order that we may be

able to stand firm when the Teacher is with us.

If we need to learn a particular lesson, the way in which we are made to learn it is by being thrown out into the world and mercilessly hammered into shape, until gradually the lesson is learned through suffering, failure, and disappointment. In this way we accumulate experience.

Now we have not the time for *all* these experiences; so we have to sit down and learn through our imagination, and arrive at the fruit of experiences which do not actually take place. In the world outside, we learn to be unselfish, to co-operate, to be tolerant. Shall we do less for the Master?

If we were all disciples, all combining for one purpose, what a tremendous power we should be in the world! This is the one thing worth living for; there

OUR PLACE IN THE PLAN

is nothing else. Do not have the desire to be great by yourself, or to evolve by yourself. Spiritual growth comes by helping others, by feeling and co-operating with others, not by trying to evolve alone. If we only opened all our windows, our emotional windows, our intellectual windows, we should see the world so differently.

The man whose windows are shut, who does not want to go outside and breathe the fresh air, is useless to the Master. And most of us are, I am afraid, in that state. We have only one or two windows open, and we think that is enough. We have not the courage to open them all, and let in the light and the fresh air. The Master within us needs all the windows open, that He may pour in His sunshine through us on the world.

I feel sure that we have all come to the point where we are definitely under the eyes of the Master. He must love

each one of us as a mother loves her child, and He must know the definite plan that each of us has to follow. Like a mother, He must be watching our efforts and longing for our success, and looking forward to the time when we shall be able to stand by ourselves. On us now rests a great responsibility. We are here in the world, because the Master has placed us here to carry on His work. How far, and in what manner, shall we respond to His trust?

Unity

DURING the Star Congress held at Ommen in 1924, I was forcibly struck by the strong sense of unity which prevailed throughout the Camp.

There were at that Camp representatives of almost every nationality that inhabits this weary earth; every form of tongue was spoken, and every variety of temperament was represented, to the delight of a keen observer; strong wills, strong personalities, some even with fanatical enthusiasm, were not lacking.

In fact, that Camp was the world in miniature, a world of strong desires, of great likes and dislikes, of ambition and humility, of the saint and the sinner. For three happy days we were gathered to-

gether, with a feeling of intense friendship, though some of us had never seen or met each other before. In the audience, there were a great many of my intimate friends whom I have known for thirteen years. During the many talks, there took place within me a curious change, which was shared by many there present.

My friends, many of whom were sitting sometimes quite close to me, and at other times at a considerable distance from me, seemed somehow to be merged in the gathering, and the whole audience became my friend. It is very difficult to explain what really happened, but this feeling impressed itself upon me clearly, and was almost overwhelming in its strength.

There were many, I am sure, who had the same feeling; and I sincerely hope they will treasure that feeling as one of the most sacred experiences of their lives. There was no longer any sense of indivi-

duality, of a separated self, glorying in its own particular heaven; we were all one. Happiness was not the privilege of one individual alone, nor was sorrow something to be hidden away in the depth of one's own aching heart; we were all one and we shared all things alike.

Personally, I felt intensely that what affected one member of the audience, equally affected me. His happiness was mine, and his sorrow was my sorrow. My love was his love, my ecstasy was equally his; my adoration was his delight, we were all one. My exaltation was his stepping-stone, my efforts were his, my enthusiasm gave him encouragement; my sorrow, my ill-temper, my petty worries, my selfishness, were all his, for we were all one.

Ever since I left that Camp-Congress, this feeling has been with me. We are one with all that lives, whether it be a Star member, a crippled beggar, or a woman with scarlet lips and bold stare. We

are all in the same boat, buffeted by many winds, or lazily and happily floating on the calm seas, and bound, eventually, for the same port. Each one of us will find refuge in the Eternal Abode of the Gods.

We have all shared the ecstasy of the Oneness of Life; though we may not have the privilege and happiness of continuity of feeling, yet we must try constantly to return and dwell in that state where we were unable to separate our selves from those of our friends, and our love from that of our enemies, if we had such. We must feel the hurt of another as our own; we must feel as our own the insult hurled at another, whether he be brown, black, yellow or white, whether he be our friend or an unknown; and the happiness of another must dispel our sorrow.

Strive ever to destroy *self*. You cannot enter the abode of the Gods unless

you have destroyed *self utterly*. Search unceasingly the avenues where lurks the *self*, and having driven him out of one place, rest not satisfied with the glory of conquest, but like a man pursued by a hundred terrors, speed from one avenue to another, from one secret place to another, ever watchful, ever destroying, ever ruthless in your annihilation of self. There must be *no* peace, *no* happiness, *no* rejoicing, until you are master of your self. As a warrior goes forth, strong in confidence and belief in his success, strong in courage and in dignity, so must you go forth to bring back the trophies of your wars to the altar of your conquered self. Then you shall be a Master, worthy to approach and to worship in adoration the Greatest Master, the Teacher of all.

